

L. P. M.

CHAPTER I

THE MAN AND THE HOUR

THE Secretary of State, although he sought to maintain an air of official reserve, showed that he was deeply impressed by what he had just heard.

"Well, young man, you are certainly offering to undertake a pretty large contract."

He smiled, and continued in a slightly rhetorical vein—the Secretary was above all things first, last, and always an orator.

"In my many years of public life," he said, "I have often had occasion to admire the dauntless spirit of our young men. But you have forced me to the conclusion that even I, with all my confidence in their power, have failed to realize how inevitably American initiative and independence